

Walsh names John Barros as Boston economic development chief



Mayor Martin J. Walsh named one of his pivotal campaign supporters, John F. Barros, to be the city's first chief of economic development, a key post in a new administration that has promised major changes at the Boston Redevelopment Authority.

Barros, a former school committee member and nonprofit executive, was once Walsh's rival as both men ran for mayor last year in the crowded preliminary election. Barros finished sixth, but two weeks later he and another losing candidate, Felix G. Arroyo, joined Walsh's campaign in the final election.

The endorsements gave Walsh a substantial boost among black and Latino voters, and helped him expand beyond his base and win the election. Barros's appointment as economic development czar had been widely expected. Walsh named Arroyo chief of health and human services shortly before taking office in January.

Barros is the son of Cape Verdean immigrants. He grew up off Dudley Street and rose from Roxbury to the Ivy League, attending Dartmouth College. After working in big business in Manhattan, Barros returned to the streets of his youth and helped run the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, a well-known nonprofit.



The post of economic development chief is new, with jurisdiction over an array of city departments and agencies. Barros will be one of 17 members of the mayor's cabinet.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority will maintain its own director and board, but the agency will be part of Barros's purview. In addition to the Boston Redevelopment Authority, he will oversee consumer affairs and licensing, tourism, the Boston Employment Commission, jobs and community service, special events, the Boston Residents Jobs Policy, and the Small and Local Business Enterprise Office.

Andrew Ryan -bostonglobe.com